

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6635

INFO AMCONSUL IBADAN

AMCONSUL KADUNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 LAGOS 2090

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, NI, PINT, PINR

SUBJECT: OUTLINES OF POLITICAL PARTIES

REF: (A) LAGOS 730, (B) 77 LAGOS 13461, (C) 77 LAGOS 14692

SUMMARY: ACCORDING TO UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR AND POLITICAL ACTIVIST, WALTER OFONOGORO, FIVE POLITICAL GROUPINGS - AN EASTERN/NORTHERN CONNECTION, AN AWOLOWA GROUP, THE SOCIALISTS, THE MIDDLE BELTERS, AND A SECOND NORTHERN GROUP - ARE EMERGING AS FUTURE NIGERIAN POLITICAL PARTIES. END SUMMARY.

1. ON FEBRUARY 16, EMBASSY OFFICER MET WITH LAGOS UNIVERSITY POLITICAL ACTIVIST WALTER OFONOGORO FOR EXTENDED DISCUSSION ON FUTURE POLITCS OF CIVILIAN RULE IN NIGERIA. OFONOGORO, HISTORY PROFESSOR WITH COLUMBIA PH.D., LAST YEAR TURNED DOWN A LUCRATIVE OFFER FROM THE NATIONAL UNION COUNCIL (NUC) TO ESTABLISH ORGANIZATIONS AT A LOCAL LEVEL THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. HE HAS JUST PUBLISHED STUDY OF CONSTITUTIONAL DRAFTING COMMITTEE (CDC) WHICH WILL BE RELEASED IN A PRESS CONFERENCE BY CHAIRMAN UDOMA AT THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY (CA) WHEN IT RETURNS
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FROM THE ID JL MAULUD HOLIDAY. OFONOGORO IS ANLBO AND PLANS TO RUN FOR THE NATIONAL HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES FROM IMO STATE IN 1979.

2. TOPICS OF DISCUSSION INCLUDED THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL PARTIES, CA MEMBERSHIP, PRESIDENTIAL ASPIRANTS, AND ROLE OF CURRENT MILITARY LEADERS AFTER 1979.

3. DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL PARTIES: OFONOGORO STRESSED THAT THE SITUATION IS STILL EXTREMELY FLUID WITH A GOOD DEAL OF UNDERGROUND TALKING GOING ON THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY AND IN THE CA. BUT HE FELT FIVE GROUPINGS WERE EMERGING.

-- A HAUSA NORTH/IBO EAST ALLIANCE. THIS GROUPING IS MIRRORED IN THE SOMEWHAT ABORTIVE NATIONAL UNION COUNCIL (REF B) WHICH HAS A BROADER BASE BEYOND THE CA. POLITICALLY, ITS ELECTORAL BASE WOULD BE THE 'SEVEN HAUSA STATES' PLUS IMO AND ANAMBRA. A NORTHERNER WOULD HAVE TO HEAD THE TICKET. OFONOGORO DEFENDED THE LOGIC OF SUCH A GROUPING BY POINTING TO THE SUCCESSFUL BALEWA/AZIKRIVE ALLIANCE THAT LAUNCHED NIGERIA. IN A SWIPE AT THE YORUBA WEST, HE ADDED THAT OPPONENTS WHO HAVE TRIED TO KILL EACH OTHER HAVE MORE RESPECT FOR EACH OTHER THAN THEY HAVE FOR SOMEONE WHO SAT ON THE SIDELINES.

-- AWOLOWA. OFONOGORO SEES A REBUILDING OF AWOLOWA'S OLD ACTION GROUP, AT LEAST IN LAGOS, OGUN, AND OYO. BUT ITS LIMITS ARE CLEARLY RESTRICTED, GIVEN ANTI-AWOLOWO SENTIMENT AMONG THE YORUBAS THEMSELVES, PARTICULARLY AKINTOLA'S OLD FOLLOWERS IN KWARA. AWOLOWO'S BEST HOPE FOR INTER-REGIONAL ALLIES WILL BE IN RIVERS AND CROSS RIVER STATES WITH THEIR ANTI IBO MINORITIES.

-- THE SOCIALISTS. THE SOCIALISTS WOULD BE FEW IN NUMBER AND LED, IRONICALLY, BY THE DISAFFECTED
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SONS OF THE NORTHERN ARISTOCRACY, SHABU UMAR ABDULLAHI OF AMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY (ABU) ZARIA FOR EXAMPLE. OFONOGORO SEES THE SOCIALISTS AS A LIMITED FORCE, AS 'NIGERIANS ARE CAPITALISTS DOWN TO THE POOREST STREET TRADER.'

-- THE MIDDLE BELTERS. AN AMORPHOUS GROUPING, THE MIDDLE BELTERS LED BY THE TALENTED PAUL UNONGO WERE CLUSTERING UNDER THE UMBRELLA OF THE COUNCIL FOR UNITY AND SOLIDARITY FOUNDED IN JOS LAST OCTOBER. THEIR MAIN TIE IS ANTI-NORTHERN SENTIMENT WHICH IS MANIFESTED IN THE CA IN THEIR VIRULENT OPPOSITION TO A FEDERAL SHARIA COURT. MANY MIDDLE BELTERS HAVE GRIM MEMORIES OF HOW SHARIA COURTS HAD BEEN USED AGAINST CHRISTIAN POLITICAL OPPONENTS IN THE PAST IN THE OLD NORTHER REGION.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 LAGOS 2090

-- A SECOND NORTHERN GROUPING. IT WOULD BE BASED ON
'OUT' NORTHERN POLITICIANS PLUS NORTHERN MINORITIES. ITS
COMPOSITION WILL BE DETERMINED BY WHO FOLDS INTO THE FIRST
GROUPING AND WHO DOES NOT

4. 'COMERS' AND 'GOERS' IN THE CA: OFONOGORO SAID FOR
MANY OLDER CA MEMBERS, DRAFTING THE CONSTITUTION WOULD BE
THEIR LAST HURRAH IN POLITICS. CHAIRMAN UDOMA FALLS INTO
THAT CATAGORY AS WELL AS K. O. MBADIWE. MEMBERS WITH A
REAL FUTURE IN NIGERIAN POLITICS INCLUDE JOSEPH WAYAS,
MOHAMMED ABUBAKAR KINI (REF C), IBRAHIM TAHIR, AND PAUL
UNONGO.

5. PRESIDENTIAL HOPEFULS: THIS IS ANOTHER AREA OF FLUIDITY
ACCORDING TO OFONOGORO. HE FELT MANY OLDER POLITICIANS,
INCLUDING AMINO KANO JOSEPH TARKA, WERE TOO TAINTED BY THE
PAST. M. A. CIROMA HAS RUINED HIMSELF WITH THE LEYLAND
SCANDAL, 'A VERY EXPENSIVE 50,000 NAIRA -- IT COST HIM
THE PRESIDENCY,' IF FORCRCED TO GUESS, OFONOGORO WOULD
SAY THAT SHEBU SHAGARI WILL BE THE FIRST PRESIDENT.

6. FUTURE OF CURRENT MILITARY LEADERS: OFONOGORO DOES NOT
BELIEVE THAT A DEGAULLE/ WASHINGTON TRANSITION FROM MILITARY
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TO CIVILIAN RULE WILL OCCUR. THE REAL DEGAULLE FIGURE,
MURTALA MOHAMMED, IS DEAD. OBASANJO LACKS THE PUBLIC
IMAGE AND PREFERS TO MAKE MONEY AFTER 1979. YAR'ADUA
COULD GO INTO POLITICS BUT PROBABLY AT THE STATE GOVERNOR
LEVEL IN THE NORTH TO LET THE DUST SETTLE FROM THE

MILITARY REGIME. THE
MILITARY MAN TO WATCH IS HASSAN
KATSINA, FORMER MILITARY GOVERNOR OF THE NORTHERN REGION
AND EX-CHIEF OF STAFF.

7. COMMENT: OFONOGORO'S POTPOURRI OF IMPRESSIONS
PROVIDES THE VIEW OF AN IBO POLITICAL ACTIVIST ON THE
EVOLVING NIGERIAN POLITICAL SCENE. HIS COMMENTS ON THE
DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL PARTIES WERE OF GREATEST INTEREST.
HIS SUGGESTION THAT THE NUC IS AN EMBRYONIC NORTHERN/EASTERN
ALLIANCE IS QUITE INTERESTING, BUT HIS VIEWS MAY BE INFLUENCED
AT LEAST IN PART BY HIS APPARENT SYMPATHIES TO SUCH AN
ALLIANCE. WE ALSO AGREE WITH HIS VIEW THAT THE SOCIALISTS
WILL PROBABLY BE THE ONLY TRUE NATIONAL PARTY, AND THEY
ARE LIKELY TO BE A LIMITED FORCE IN NIGERIAN POLITICS. WE
ARE LESS QUICK, HOWEVER, IN LUMPING THE 'OUTS' OF THE NORTH
IN ONE GROUP. WE MAY WELL BE CORRECT, BUT THE NON-HAUSA/
FULANIS OF NORTHEASTERN NIGERIA MAY NOT NECESSARILY SEE
THEIR LOT SO CLEARLY LINED WITH OTHERS IN THE NORTH. FINALLY,
ON POLITICAL PARTIES, WE BELIEVE THERE IS YET ANOTHER LIKELY
GROUP WHICH WE BELIEVE OFONOGORO OVERLOOKED--THE ANTI-AWOLOWO
YORUBAS.

8. IN HIS REMARKS CONCERNING PRESIDENTIAL HOPEFULS. OFONOGORO
CLEARLY SHARES OUR VIEW. THE OLDER POLITICIANS HAVE A LONG
LIST OF NEGATIVE ATTRIBUTES, USUALLY INCLUDING THE TAIN OF
CORRUPTION, AND THE YOUNGER POLITICIANS HAVE YET TO EMERGE
BECAUSE OF THE LENGTHY PERIOD OF MILITARY RULE. ALTHOUGH
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TOO EARLY TO TELL, WE ARE STILL INCLINED TO BELIEVE AN
OLDER POLITICIAN IS LIKELY TO EMERGE AS PRESIDENT WITH THE
RETURN TO CIVILIAN RULE.

9. THE KEY POINT THROUGHOUT HIS REMARKS, WITH WHICH WE
HEARTILY CONCUR, IS THAT THE SITUATION REMAINS EXTREMELY
FLUID AND IT MAY BE MANY MONTHS BEFORE CLEAR LEADERS
AND ALLIANCES EMERGE.

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